

A Study on the Communist Youth League's Online Publicity Work in the New Media Environment (Postprint)

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Abstract

New media has become the primary platform for internet development in China, with young netizens constituting the main force on these platforms. Simultaneously, the new media environment has presented unprecedented opportunities and challenges for the publicity and guidance work of the Communist Youth League. This study employs the official WeChat account “Shaoxing Youth” as a case study to explore methods and pathways for Communist Youth League publicity work within the new media context. It proposes achieving conceptual identification to proactively occupy the main position in new media public opinion discourse; platform integration to proactively construct an all-media dissemination system; and content guidance to proactively enhance the guiding power of new media content.

Full Text

Preamble

Research on the Communist Youth League's Online Propaganda Work in the New Media Environment

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Abstract: New media has become the primary platform for internet development in China, with young netizens forming its main user base. This simultaneously presents unprecedented opportunities and challenges for the Communist Youth League's (CYL) propaganda and guidance work. Using the official WeChat account “Shaoxing Youth” as a case study, this paper explores methods and approaches for CYL propaganda work in the new media context, proposing three key strategies: achieving conceptual identification to actively occupy the main new media public opinion positions; integrating platforms to

actively construct an all-media publishing system; and guiding content to actively strengthen the guiding power of new media content.

Keywords: new media; internet; CYL work; platform integration; propaganda guidance

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Introduction

In February 2021, the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) released its 47th “Statistical Report on Internet Development in China” (hereinafter referred to as the “Report”). The Report revealed that by December 2020, China’s internet user population had reached 989 million, with 986 million mobile internet users, representing 99.7% of all netizens accessing the internet via mobile devices. Among Chinese netizens, those aged 10-19 accounted for 13.5%, while the 20-29 age group comprised 17.8% [?]. According to the Report, “digital interactive” new media based on mobile phones has become the main platform for China’ s internet development, with young netizens emerging as the dominant force on these platforms. As media theorist Marshall McLuhan observed, “The medium is the basic driving force of social development and the marker that distinguishes different social forms. The emergence and application of each new medium announces that we have entered a new era” [?]. In this new media era, young people have naturally become its main participants. The rapid development of new media has brought great convenience to youth, and as the primary organization representing young people, the Communist Youth League shoulders the glorious mission of guiding them. This raises critical questions: how to effectively utilize new media, how to establish a firm foothold in the new media environment, and how to excel in CYL work under these new conditions—all of which present both opportunities and challenges.

1.1.1 Expanding the Coverage of CYL Propaganda and Guidance

The rapid development of new media technology has made it the primary platform for young people’ s ideological expression, daily communication, and interactive engagement. Youth groups gather on new media platforms such as websites, QQ groups, forums, Weibo, and WeChat, forming emerging youth self-organizations. This creates new opportunities for CYL grassroots regional organization building and service-oriented organizational development, helping to expand the League’ s coverage. CYL organizations can fully leverage new media technology to strengthen online propaganda and guidance, enhance the construction, management, and guidance of online CYL organizations, and achieve

broad coverage and close connections with youth. For example, the Shaoxing Municipal Committee of the CYL has used WeChat official accounts as a medium to build new media platforms, gradually becoming an important voice in the Shaoxing region' s new media landscape.

1.1.2 Innovating CYL Propaganda and Guidance Methods

Guiding youth ideology is the fundamental task of CYL propaganda work, and strengthening the promotion of socialist core values among young people is an important mission in the new era. In the new media age, significant transformations have occurred in communicators, audiences, content, channels, and effects. The massive and rapid nature of information dissemination has weakened the control of communication subjects, gradually shifting the traditional media' s “gatekeeper” role. With “everyone having a microphone,” information production and dissemination are almost synchronized, significantly impacting information control and allowing large amounts of harmful content—such as pornographic information, images, and violent videos—to spread widely, causing harm to young people' s physical and mental health. Therefore, CYL propaganda methods in the new media era must adapt to these characteristics, fully utilize new media platforms, actively innovate propaganda approaches, disseminate positive energy, and purify cyberspace.

1.1.3 Improving CYL Propaganda and Guidance Effectiveness

Social mobilization is the primary form of CYL propaganda and guidance, involving the mobilization of social resources, manpower, and spirit to encourage participation in political, economic, cultural, and social activities—an essential condition for promoting social development [?]. For a long time, CYL organizations have effectively combined organizational and social mobilization methods to achieve good propaganda results. However, with the development of new media technology and further social differentiation, media empowerment has become the new background for CYL mobilization. When comparing traditional media era mobilization models with new media era models (as shown in Table 1), it becomes clear that CYL propaganda effectiveness needs further improvement, and socialized network mobilization should become the main approach to enhancing propaganda impact in the new media era.

1.2.3 Self-Development Aspects

With the development of technology and new media, traditional CYL work methods can no longer meet current needs. As various short video apps become popular, young people are easily attracted to them. Traditional mainstream media, being relatively formal and rigorous, is less likely to be disseminated widely. When facing these new opportunities, whether CYL work can clarify the characteristics of new media methods, effectively integrate new media with CYL work, and adopt more lively forms that suit young people' s realities to leverage new media' s role in CYL propaganda becomes crucial. However, limitations in

understanding new media and challenges in building university CYL teams can hinder this process.

2. Pathways and Practices of CYL Propaganda Guidance in the New Media Context

The opportunities and challenges facing CYL propaganda work in the new media environment demand both theoretical understanding and practical experience. This paper takes the “Shaoxing Youth” WeChat official account operated by the Shaoxing Municipal Committee of the CYL as the primary research object to summarize and refine pathways for CYL propaganda guidance in the new media context. The Shaoxing Municipal Committee has adapted to changes in new media-era CYL propaganda by using the “Shaoxing Youth” WeChat official account as its main platform, strengthening the WeChat system construction at all levels of CYL organizations, and using appealing and lively content to serve and guide young people, achieving remarkable results.

2.1 Building an All-Media Publishing System

2.1.1 Constructing a WeChat-Centered New Media Publishing Matrix Mobile internet has become the main channel for information dissemination. With the continuous development of 5G, big data, cloud computing, the Internet of Things, and artificial intelligence, mobile media will enter a new stage of accelerated development. We must adhere to a mobile-first strategy, build our own mobile communication platforms, and properly manage commercial and socialized internet platforms, enabling mainstream media to firmly occupy the commanding heights of public opinion guidance, ideological leadership, cultural inheritance, and service to the people through mobile communication [?]. The Shaoxing Municipal Committee of the CYL has taken the “Shaoxing Youth” official WeChat account as its core, building a city-county-township three-level WeChat platform architecture to form a CYL-affiliated new media matrix across the city. Simultaneously, it emphasizes integration with CYL-affiliated websites, Weibo, and other information sources, enabling various departments of the municipal committee and district/county-level CYL committees to promptly compile and share information about current affairs, CYL dynamics, youth growth insights, and lifestyle content that appeals to young people.

2.1.2 Emphasizing University-Locality Cooperation The Shaoxing Municipal Committee of the CYL attaches great importance to deep integration with university resources, establishing cooperative partnerships with the School of Network Communication at Zhejiang Yuexiu University of Foreign Languages. Focusing on CYL propaganda dissemination, online civilization guidance, and online cultural product creation, they have established the “Shaoxing Youth Online Civilization Guidance Research Base” and the “Shaoxing Online Cultural Product Creation Base.” These initiatives fully utilize the resource advantages of

university network communication to strengthen new media content production and enhance the appeal and influence of new media content.

2.1.3 Extending Public Functions Multidimensional interaction channels and simple, convenient operation methods, free from temporal and spatial constraints, make online activities more extensive and attractive, providing service guarantees for young people through internet thinking. For example, the “Seeking Beautiful Zhejiang” thematic practice activity adopted an “online + offline” and “traditional + new media” approach, encouraging students to discover and showcase their beautiful hometown through their own perspectives. In serving university students, the “Home Swallow Returns, Phoenix Nests Built” summer internship position promotion event was held for the first time in Shanghai, Hangzhou, and Ningbo universities, using repeated activities and policies to attract more Shaoxing-born university students to return for internships and employment.

2.2 Strengthening Organizational Construction

2.2.1 Emphasizing Internal Institutional Building The management team is primarily responsible for reviewing and authorizing push content, thematic propaganda and planning, public opinion monitoring and response, and other team management affairs. The operations team, composed of cadres familiar with new media applications within the organization, is mainly responsible for information collection, collation, editing, and proofreading of push content, implementation of thematic activities, backend technical support, and other daily operational affairs.

2.2.2 Integrating the External Environment In building new media platforms, the Shaoxing Municipal Committee emphasizes the integration of external environmental resources, actively seeks social resources, and promotes active online-offline interaction. Taking the “Youth Love” (Qing Qing Lian) friendship brand as an example, the committee focuses on the dating and friendship needs of single youth, establishes activity bases, seeks co-construction units, and integrates various resources to help young people find partners, forming a good online-offline interactive pattern.

2.2.3 Deepening Team Building The Shaoxing Municipal Committee relies on Shaoxing’s online propaganda team to build new media work teams at all levels, primarily composed of CYL cadres and core online commentators. They conduct daily non-hierarchical communication via WeChat groups and continuously improve mechanisms for information collection, processing, publishing, and feedback to ensure content quality and frequency. To advance CYL cadres’ new media literacy and ensure effective CYL new media content construction, the committee must cultivate and enhance cadres’ professional qualities holistically, further strengthen training for new media workers, hold regular work

meetings and business lectures, and share experiences and insights to allow good ideas and articles from various districts and counties to be showcased, compared, and improved.

2.3 Content and Engagement Strategies

2.3.1 Strengthening Participation Awareness and Stimulating Organizational Identity The vast majority of young people care about whether content has direct relevance or help to them. Propaganda content that merely outputs information with single forms and empty content cannot attract youth attention, let alone achieve ideological guidance. Therefore, how to fully utilize new media technology to attract young people to join youth groups through diversified styles requires careful consideration and exploration. On the basis of effectively expanding the breadth and depth of CYL organizational activities, the committee actively creates a relaxed and free communication atmosphere, enabling youth to express ideas, share experiences, and make suggestions on the platform. For instance, to attract outstanding Shaoxing-born graduates from prestigious universities to return home, the Shaoxing Municipal CYL Committee established the Shaoxing University Student Fellowship, inviting nearly 300 outstanding Shaoxing-born university students to join this platform for mutual exchange and communication, contributing wisdom and strength to Shaoxing.

2.3.3 Strengthening Brand Awareness and Enhancing Work Influence Through a social-facing, open-subscription mechanism, the WeChat platform has gradually become an effective window for promoting Shaoxing's local culture and showcasing the city's civilized image while serving youth. This helps all sectors of society gain deeper understanding of CYL work and sincerely appreciate the dedication of CYL cadres, thereby further enhancing the social influence of the CYL work brand.

2.4 Actively Occupying the Main Position

The 19th Party Congress report states that when the younger generation has ideals, capabilities, and a sense of responsibility, the country has a future and the nation has hope. Under new circumstances, with the continuous development and changes in new media technology, CYL work must necessarily move forward in the direction of new network development by cultivating CYL new media operation talents and actively occupying the main public opinion positions. As a CYL organization, it is necessary to fully utilize various new media technical means and methods to construct an effective set of propaganda approaches, continuously advance work, broaden new pathways for ideological guidance among university youth, and continuously enhance the actual effectiveness of CYL propaganda work.

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Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.

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